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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 ANKARA 003263

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SUBJECT: TURKEY'S IRAQ COORDINATOR EXTENDS INVITATIONS TO
GOI LEADERSHIP

REF: ANKARA 3028

Classified By: DCM Nancy McEldowney, reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

¶1. (C) Summary: Iraq Coordinator Oguz Celikkol told visiting HIRC professional staff member Alan Makovsky on June 1 that he was impressed by Iraqi Prime Minister Maliki and his focus on security issues during their May 30 meeting in Baghdad. He claimed that Deputy PM Barham Salih agreed with his prescription for Kirkuk -- a referendum on a proposed solution hammered out by the residents of Kirkuk themselves. This might require a postponement of the referendum, he noted. He told FM Zabari that Turkey-KRG relations will be better once action is taken against the PKK and an equitable solution to Kirkuk's status is found. He called for renewed trilateral talks on the PKK soon after defense and interior ministers are named. On the upcoming but unscheduled meeting of Iraq's neighbors' foreign ministers in Tehran, Celikkol said the venue cannot be changed but Tehran's impatience is preventing agreement on dates. End summary.

Iraqi Leaders to Visit Turkey

¶2. (C) Celikkol provided a brief readout of his May 30 visit to Baghdad to Mr. Makovsky on June 1. Celikkol had meetings with the Prime Minister, Foreign Minister, Deputy Prime Minister Salih, Vice President Tariq Hashimi, Parliamentary Assembly Speaker and Ambassador Khalilzad. He extended an invitation to visit Turkey to PM Maliki. FM Zabari expected to visit "very soon," he said, and Salih would likely come to Istanbul in early June for a conference, and then proceed to Ankara.

Security Priority Is Impressive

¶3. (C) Maliki was preoccupied by the situation in Basrah during their meeting, Celikkol said. In fact, the south seemed to be on all the Iraqis' minds. Hashimi complained that Shia extremists were "hunting" for Sunnis in Basrah, claiming ethnic cleansing was occurring there. Nonetheless, Celikkol was impressed by Maliki and his emphasis on

security. He thought his Baghdad Plan was a positive indication of the PM's determination, as was his high priority on other security matters such as disbanding militias. Celikkol recalled having some discussions about the defense and interior minister positions, but his impression was that names under consideration were "still evolving." He feared, however, that the longer the appointments take, the harder the process would become given the differences not only among the different sectarian and ethnic groups, but also within these groups.

¶4. (C) Concern about sectarian divisions seemed pervasive to Celikkol. Even the Kurds seemed concerned. He took this as a good sign that the Kurds were beginning to see the need for Iraq to stay unified. If everyone understands that they are in the same boat and must prevent its sinking, he said, then "good things can happen."

Residents Should Solve Kirkuk Issue

¶5. (C) Barham Salih was pleasant and "said all the right things," according to Celikkol. They discussed additional border gates, although Celikkol did not provide any details. On Kirkuk, Turkey believes a solution must be found by the groups resident in the province and that solution should be what is put to a referendum. Salih agreed with this approach. When asked what this solution might be, Celikkol said that would be up to the people of Kirkuk; Turkey would not and should not be party to the negotiation. Celikkol said he agreed with Ambassador Khalilzad that a postponement

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of the referendum might be necessary. This would give time for a solution to emerge, and for Turkey and the US to encourage the different communities to talk to one another.

PKK Still Looms Large for Turkey

¶6. (C) Celikkol said he told FM Zabari agreed that Kirkuk and the PKK issues were important. He told the minister that Turkey-KRG relations would improve once these issues were addressed.

¶7. (C) In response to Makovsky's questions about the PKK, Celikkol said sealing the borders would not be enough. Turkey wants the terrorist organization eliminated from Iraq. This could be a gradual process, but steps must be taken to stop the PKK's current freedom to circulate throughout the north, including in the cities. Iraq and the US had an obligation under UN Security Council resolutions to prevent terrorist attacks on neighbors originating from inside Iraq. The problem is that no action at all has been taken against the group in Iraq, Celikkol asserted.

¶8. (C) Celikkol said he told Zabari that Ankara wanted the Iraq-Turkey-US trilateral PKK talks reconvened as soon as the ministers of interior and defense were in place. This third round must be "action-oriented" and "show results," he declared.

The US May Leave, But Neighbors Cannot

¶9. (C) Celikkol told Makovsky that while the US might be able to pull out of Iraq one day, Turkey cannot get away from Iraq. Makovsky responded that he did not think any US Administration could leave Iraq until it was stable. Celikkol said the Iraqi Sunnis wanted a conditional timetable for the withdrawal of coalition forces.

¶10. (C) Regarding the postponed meeting of neighbors' foreign

ministers in Tehran, Celikkol said the venue was decided a year ago at the last meeting and could not be changed. Turkey's effort to move the meeting to the margins of the OIC meeting in Baku did not work because FM Zabari was not attending that meeting. Iran had recently proposed June 11, but Turkey declined because FM Gul is scheduled to participate in a EU-Turkey Joint Committee meeting that day. The Egyptian Ambassador has been in close touch with Celikkol as Cairo apparently has little interest in having this meeting in Tehran, but is at a loss as to how to prevent it. In fact, as long as the Iranians keep proposing dates only a week or two in the future, participants will have conflicts. If they propose a date several months from now, it would be harder to say no, he thought.

Iranian Complaints

¶11. (C) In response to a question, Celikkol confirmed that the Iranians were claiming that the Kurdish group, PJAK, was a PKK off-shoot and was being manipulated by the US to destabilize Iran. Celikkol was unsure, however, of the organization's origins. He claimed that some Kurds have said that PJAK is a spin-off of the PUK to compete for influence with the KDP in Iranian Kurdish areas.

¶12. (U) Mr. Makovsky did not have an opportunity to clear this message.

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